

These recommendations were based on the perception by the traveling delegation that the embargo on food and medicine is hurting common Cuban citizens while failing to advance U.S. national security interests on the island. The consensus in Cuba is that Fidel Castro is not being affected by this embargo—he has all the food and medicine he needs. The Cuban people recognize that the embargo hurts only themselves, and are actively seeking help from the United States.

As we approach the final days of this session, hard-fought progress toward an easing of the embargo may still bear fruit. While the Senate considers important legislation in this area, I urge my colleagues to read both the excerpts of the report at the end of my speech and the full text of the Association report, which is available from the United States Association of Former Members of Congress at 330 A Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20002. With that, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that portions of the delegation's report be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

THE UNITED STATES ASSOCIATION OF FORMER MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

We, the four members of a delegation of the United States Association of Former Members of Congress (AFMC), visited Cuba from May 26 to June 3, 2000, to explore firsthand the current political, social and economic realities in that country and to consider what steps might be taken to improve relations between Cuba and the United States. Before traveling we were briefed by officials in the Department of State, key Members of Congress, leaders of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and officials of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, DC. The report you hold in your hands reflects the collective deliberations of the delegation, and lists six specific recommendations that we all endorse. As you will see, we did not attempt to tackle every issue involved in relations between our countries; in order to make concrete and well-founded recommendations, we focused on a core of matters that seemed particularly significant to us.

This fact-finding trip was the third and last in a series funded by a grant from the Ford Foundation to the AFMC. The other two trips were made in December 1996 and January 1999. Our recommendations closely parallel those of the previous two bipartisan delegations. To date, 15 former Members of Congress (eight Republicans and seven Democrats) have traveled to Cuba on these Ford Foundation-sponsored missions. The recommendations of all three delegations have been unanimous and are remarkably similar in terms of their implications for U.S. policy.

Unlike the two previous delegations, we did not travel as a group officially invited by the Cuban Government. We had the appropriate documentation from the United States Government, including a license from the Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control. Although the Cuban government did not extend an official invitation to the delegation, we were issued tourist visas.

The unofficial character of the visit allowed us to control our own time, to have a wide variety of meetings and to gain a much

better idea of what a cross-section of the Cuban population thinks. Unencumbered by the protocol demands that normally accompany an officially approved trip, we were free to visit a range of independent organizations, art centers, church and church-sponsored groups and research centers. We were also able to attend church services, visit markets, travel into the countryside and talk freely to private citizens. The people we met with ranged from an average woman attending an Elian Gonzalez rally whom we engaged in spontaneous conversation to Cuba's Minister of Foreign Affairs; from the tour guide of the Partagas cigar factory in Old Havana to the Papal Nuncio; from the director of the government-sponsored cultural organization Casa de las Americas to the head of the Roman Catholic relief organization, Caritas; from an urban planner sympathetic to the current regime in Cuba to some of the most controversial figures—including Marta Beatriz Roque, Rene Gomez Manzano, and Felix Bonne—and independent journalists living in that country today.

On the ground in Cuba, we heard a remarkably diverse array of voices and observed a highly complex set of political and social circumstances; nonetheless, we submit this report in the conviction that the implementation of our recommendations can only further the interests of both the United States and the people of Cuba.

JOHN BRADEMAS,
D—Indiana.

J. BUECHNER,
R—Missouri.

FRED GRANDY,
R—Iowa.

LARRY LAROCO,
D—Idaho.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our recommendations are based on our extensive discussions during our trip to Cuba. Our recommendations closely parallel those of the two previous bipartisan delegations of the U.S. Association of Former Members of Congress.

1. Congress and the administration should begin a phased reduction of sanctions legislation, as defined in the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 (PL 102-484) and the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 (Helms-Burton, PL 104-114). As a first step, current legislation on Capitol Hill (H.R. 3140 and S. 2382) to remove all restrictions on the sales (for gifts) of food and medicines should be enacted.

2. Serious consideration should be given to the establishment of a U.S. bank in Havana if legislation to authorize the sales of food and medicine is approved by Congress and the Administration.

3. Opportunities for people-to-people contact between citizens of the United States and Cuba should be expanded, particularly through two-way exchanges in the fields of education and culture. More links between educational, cultural and non-governmental institutions in our two countries should also be established.

4. The current ceilings on annual remittances from the United States to Cuba should be raised significantly, if not eliminated.

5. Steps should be taken to facilitate direct fights between the United States and Cuba.

6. Steps should be taken to improve Internet communication between the citizens of both countries. Initiatives aimed at enabling Cuban citizens to gain greater access to the Internet should be encouraged, and support should be given to individuals and entities involved in the creation of websites and other electronic platforms aimed at improving mutual understanding between the peoples of the United States and Cuba.

SUPPORT FOR FEDERAL-STATE-PARTNERSHIPS RELATIVE TO SCHOOL MODERNIZATION

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise to express my strong support for initiatives to create a federal-state-local partnership relative to public school construction and renovation throughout America. At a time when unprecedented budget surpluses are being projected by budget leaders at both the White House and in Congress, it seems clear to me that some modest portion of these funds ought to be used to assist our school districts. In South Dakota, it has become increasingly difficult to pass school bond issues, given the fact that real estate taxes are already too high and our state's agricultural economy has been struggling. The result is an enormous backlog of school construction needs, and the costs of repair and replacement only increase with each passing year.

To propose a new school construction partnership is not to suggest some sort of "federalization" of K-12 public education. The decisions as to whether to replace or repair a school would remain with the local school districts where they belong, and by far the largest share of the expense would continue to be met by local taxpayers. Even so, a federal effort to reduce interest costs or otherwise participate in reducing the total cost of school construction could often times make the difference between a successful project or none at all. If the federal government were to simply block grant these funds, the dollars would have to be disbursed in such a broad manner that no school district would receive a sufficient amount of help to seriously make a real difference.

While I appreciate that school construction assistance must be targeted to help needy school districts first, I do want to convey my strong opinion that the eligibility requirements for a federal-local partnership should not be so restrictive as to eliminate the possibility of many of our school districts from participating. South Dakota has a great many school districts which are not completely impoverished, but yet find it almost impossible to pass a bond issue and otherwise adequately fund their education programs. This program should apply to more than just the extreme poverty situations of inner urban areas and remote rural areas. It should apply as well to the many small and medium size communities all across our country that seriously struggle with school construction and renovation needs.

I applaud and support these efforts to invest a small portion of our Nation's wealth in improved educational opportunities and facilities for all—this investment now, will result in improved academic performance, better citizenship and a stronger economy for generations to come.